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SUBJECT: EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT DEBATES TURKISH  
ACCESSION

11. (SBU) Summary: On December 14, the European Parliament (EP) will present its non-binding but influential "opinion" whether or not the EU should open accession negotiations with Turkey. The EP views will not have much influence on the European Council decision of the heads of states and governments, but will likely be cited by them in their own debate on December 17. In particular, EU leaders could mine the final EP opinion for arguments and points to support their positions. End summary

POSITIVE FIRST STEP IN DEBATE  
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12. (U) In their draft report adopted on November 30 by the Foreign Affairs committee, MEPs called for opening the accession negotiations with Turkey "without undue delay." Amendments tabled by some Christian-democrats, stating that the door should stay open for the negotiation process to end in a "privileged partnership" instead of formal accession, were rejected in committee. Some Christian-Democrats might retable amendments for the plenary vote on December 14. Currently, a majority of MEPs appear to be in favor of opening negotiations in 2005 with Turkey's full EU membership as the objective by means of an "open-ended process".

13. (SBU) The European Parliament (EP) has been, and remains the center of intense political debate on the opening of negotiations with Turkey. Very tough of Turkey in its first draft, the report drafted by Dutch Christian Democrat Camiel Eurling, had been widely criticized in committee, with Liberal, Socialist and green MEPs qualifying its tone as "brutal." Hundreds of amendments tabled and adopted in committee made the final version much more positive towards Turkey's prospects for accession. A Turkish diplomat told us that the Turkish Mission had been very active in providing MEPs with documents including suggestions to make the report more acceptable to Ankara

14. (SBU) In the foreign affairs committee debate, amendments stating that the negotiation process could be leading to a "special partnership" between Turkey and the EU instead of full membership were all rejected. An EP staffer told us these amendments could be resubmitted by French and German Christian democrats who still strongly oppose Turkey's accession to the EU. Current conventional wisdom is these amendments will fail on December 14.

ARMENIA  
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15. (SBU) Another delicate matter in the report involved the language on the Armenian issue. The report, as adopted in the foreign affairs committee, mentions the word "genocide" once but amendments proposing Turkish acknowledgement of "genocide" as a prerequisite for accession were not adopted. French MEPs have been most active in pushing this issue and it could comeback on December 14. On this issue also, most political groups are split and a staffer from the socialist group told us that his group would not impose any "party line."

CYPRUS  
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16. (SBU) Cyprus is difficult for the EP. The foreign affairs report contained relatively vague language saying that start of accession negotiations "implies" Turkish recognition of Cyprus. The report however dropped the word "occupying" forces and simply calls for the "early withdrawal of its (Turkey's) forces according to a specific timetable..." How to handle Cyprus is likely to a

point of debate during the plenary session.

#### A TURKISH ASSESSMENT

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17. (SBU) According to a Turkish diplomat following this debate in the EP, the heads of states may want to refer to it to give their final decision at the European Council the seal of "democratic legitimacy."

MCKINLEY